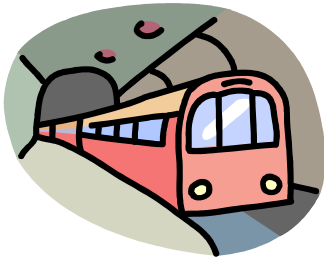


AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

MBTA Access Upgrades Expected



Cambridge residents and visitors with disabilities should eventually enjoy greatly improved accessibility to some of the City's Red Line subway stations.

Following a class action lawsuit filed by disability advocates in 2002, MBTA officials have recently been pledging considerable additional resources for accessibility improvements to MBTA facilities.

While exact terms of an anticipated settlement agreement have not yet been disclosed, sources close to the settlement discussions have indicated the MBTA plans to repair or replace some of the system's most breakdown-prone elevators, including some elevators at the Central Square, Harvard Square, and Porter Square Red Line stations.

Addressing a group of disability rights advocates on November 4th, MBTA General Manager Dan Grabauskas pledged \$110 to 130 million over next 5 years on elevator/escalator repair and replacement, and an additional \$23 million on upgrading subway public address systems, to make them more accessible. "Nothing you've demanded isn't something we shouldn't do—nothing," said Grabauskas. "Over the last several months we've put together a great plan" for improving access to the MBTA facilities, promised Grabauskas. "You have my personal word on it."

(More on MBTA Access page 2)

Taxicab Rates, Coupons Go Up March 27



On March 27, Cambridge taxicabs will start charging more for their services--about 13 percent more. In an effort to keep pace with

taxicab rate increases, Cambridge will also increase the value of taxi discount coupons for residents who are elderly or disabled. Coupons issued through this program will have a face value of \$2.25 (up from \$2.00). When the new rates go into effect, riders will be able to use up to two coupons per one-way ride with a fare over \$6.50.

Cambridge residents with disabilities can receive a break on their taxi costs by enrolling in the City's Taxi Discount Program through the Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Our contact information is on the back page. Residents 60 years of age and up may enroll in the Taxi Discount Program through the Cambridge Council on Aging.

According to the Cambridge License Commission, which imposed the rate increases following a public comment period, a ride in a Cambridge taxi will soon cost \$4.95 for the first mile and \$3.20 for each subsequent mile (40¢ per 1/8 mile).

The License Commission last increased taxicab meter rates in 2003. These increases reflect a commitment on the part of the City of Cambridge to keep taxi rates in line with inflation, and to help taxi drivers realize a living wage.

MBTA Access (cont'd)

In 2002, the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) joined forces with Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) to launch a class-action lawsuit against the MBTA on behalf of riders with disabilities. "We have been advocating for improved bus service, better subways, more accessible stations throughout the MBTA," said Bill Henning, Executive Director of BCIL. "People with disabilities throughout the Greater Boston area, including Boston, Cambridge, Quincy, and Newton -- have been clamoring for years for more accessible MBTA services."

Henning points out that all riders on the MBTA, whether they have a disability or not, benefit from improvements such as improved elevator service, low-floor buses, and clearly audible announcements in train stations, on buses and subway cars. "Grassroots organizing has placed a great deal of pressure on the MBTA to change, and expert legal arguments by GBLS has forced the MBTA to deal with complying with the ADA," said Henning. Since Grabauskas became General Manager of the MBTA in May of last year, Henning has observed a real improvement in the willingness of the MBTA to improve accessibility: "We now have a General Manager who believes that this is the right thing to do, with a consequence that in the early spring of 2006, we expect a major settlement agreement to end our lawsuit."

Problems Mar Kick-Off Of New Medicare Drug Benefit

The January 1 rollout of the new prescription drug benefit, called Medicare Part D, has been plagued with operational problems, leaving untold numbers of people with disabilities unable to fill vital prescriptions, according to reports from pharmacists and consumers.

According to the Medicare Rights Center (MRC), among those affected are people with both Medicare and Medicaid, so-called "dual-eligibles" who lost their Medicaid drug benefit on December 31, a day after a federal district judge rejected MRC's legal bid to extend Medicaid drug coverage as a safety net.

The safety net erected by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to ensure all dual-eligibles were able to receive their medications has failed in numerous instances.

An electronic database managed by NDCHealth, a CMS contractor, has been overwhelmed by queries from pharmacists trying to find out which plan dually eligible customers are enrolled in.

In addition, pharmacists have often been unable to process prescriptions for dual-eligibles who switched from the plan that CMS had assigned them, with neither the original plan nor the new plan accepting claims.

The database is also failing to recognize people's eligibility for the Extra Help program, meaning that they are charged substantially more than the \$1 and \$3 copayments that dual eligibles are supposed to pay for generic and brand name drugs, respectively.

Prescription drug plans have also failed in several cases to fill initial prescriptions for new enrollees of chronic medications that are not covered under their formularies. All plans were required by CMS to have policies to transition new enrollees and ensure continuous drug coverage.

In response to these reports, MRC is asking CMS to require plans, under penalty of sanction, to provide temporary fills of non-covered drugs under their transition policies. In addition, MRC is asking CMS to direct plans to charge the appropriate copayments to all dual-eligibles, even if their enrollment status and eligibility for Extra Help has not been fully processed.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- March 1 **28th Annual Legislative Reception**, 10:30 am to 1 pm in the Grand Staircase Hall of the State House in Boston. Join people with disabilities, family members, legislators, and agency staff to recognize individuals for their good advocacy work, hear testimony about State services, and visit with your Senators and Representatives about key bills and budget items. Sponsored by the Developmental Disabilities Council and The Arc of Massachusetts. Public may enter on Bowdoin Street (fully accessible) or the East Wing Entrance on Beacon Street; be prepared to show identification. For more information contact Kelly Conrad at <kellyc@charter.net> or 508-856-1362.
- March 1 **RSI (repetitive strain injury) Monthly Drop-in Support & Information Meeting** (no registration is necessary) on first Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 pm at 650 Beacon Street in Boston, 4th floor Conference Room, just steps from the MBTA station in Kenmore Square. Be sure to arrive before 7 pm when the lobby door is locked. RSI Action volunteers will answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view our provider evaluation book. For more information, call 617-247-6827, check web at <www.rsiaction.org> or email <cnot@rsiaction.org>.
- March 2 **An IEP for My Child** is a workshop that takes parents step-by-step through the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) for their child who receives special education services because of his/her disability. Parents learn how to articulate a Vision for their child, how to use the results of evaluations to set goals and how to measure their child's progress. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be held at Hardy Elementary School, 52 Lake Street in Arlington, 7 to 9 pm. Workshop materials are available in Spanish. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- March 5 **Accessible Ice Skating** program offered by DCR Universal Access Program at Shea Memorial Rink, 351 Willard St. in Quincy, 2 to 3:50 pm and again on March 19, same time. There are minimal fees for admission and conventional skates. One end of the rink will be coned off for sled skating. Call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980 to register.
- March 8 **Celebrate Yourself! Self-Determination and Successful Students** is a workshop for young people with special needs and their parents. It emphasizes: knowledge of your learning styles; teaching others about how you learn; recognizing your talents, abilities and strengths; and, developing empowerment and leadership skills. The workshop, sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) will be held at Lowell Elementary School in Watertown, 7 to 9 pm, and again on March 14 in Braintree. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- March 8 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture, 7 to 8 pm, on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
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- March 9 **Turning Three** is a workshop for parents that highlights the differences between Early Intervention and publicly funded preschool for children with disabilities. Discussion includes eligibility for special education, the Team process for decision-making and the parents' role in the transition process to preschool. It is sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) and will be held at the Cambridge-Somerville Early Intervention, 61 Medford Street in Somerville, 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- March 9 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- March 9 **See, Hear, Feel the Music** with *JazzArtSigns*, Lisa Thorson's groundbreaking multimedia, multisensory and interactive improvised jazz performance piece for all audiences. *JazzArtSigns* provides a universally accessible, cross-disciplinary concert experience that redefines the way audiences interact with live performances and makes live jazz accessible to all people with and without disabilities. The program begins at 7:30 pm; it is presented by VSA Arts of Massachusetts and the Wheelock Family Theatre at 200 The Riverway in Boston. For tickets (\$10 for students, \$20 for adults) contact 617-879-2300 voice, 617-879-2150 TTY or <tickets@wheelock.edu>.
- March 12 **Accessible Ice Skating** program offered by DCR Universal Access Program at the Flynn Memorial Rink, Woodland Road in Medford, 12 to 1:50 pm. There are minimal fees for admission and conventional skates. One end of the rink will be coned off for sled skating. Call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980 to register.
- March 14 **Celebrate Yourself! Self-Determination and Successful Students** is a workshop for young people with special needs and their parents. (See March 8 listing for description.) The workshop will be held at East Middle School on River Road in Braintree, 7 to 9 pm. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- March 14 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm. 142. Go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.com> to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- March 15 **DEADLINE** for submitting applications for **August 1-17, 2006 US/Japan exchange program** sponsored by Mobility International USA (MIUSA). Participants must be US citizens ages 18-24 by July 31, 2006. MIUSA programs include people with and without disabilities and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. *Individuals who are Deaf, have a visual impairment, mobility impairment or any other type of disability are encouraged to apply, as well as young people from minority communities or low socioeconomic status.* \$1100 program cost covers round-trip international airfare from US departure city, meals, lodging and activities; generous partial scholarships are available. For more information check <www.miusa.org> or contact Jena Price at 541-343-1284 (voice /tty) or <exchange@miusa.org>.
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- March 18 **The Kids Are All Right** is a documentary about a renegade “Jerry’s Kid,” Mike Ervin who was a Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) poster child back in the 1960’s. The film challenges the MDA’s use of pity to raise money in its telethon and takes a look at Mike Ervin’s activist group called Jerry’s Orphans who protest outdated attitudes about people with disabilities. Mike Ervin will be present at the screening. This is the second in a *Disability Culture on Film* series at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston. This screening will include another short British documentary about a teacher trying to make a film with a crew of disabled kids. Show time is 2:30 pm. Tickets are \$9 and \$8 for MFA members, students and seniors. The Museum Road entrance is accessible. For more information call 617-369-3306 voice or 617-369-3393 TTY.
- March 19 **Accessible Ice Skating** program offered by DCR Universal Access Program at Shea Memorial Rink, 351 Willard St. in Quincy, 2-3:50 pm . There are minimal fees for admission.
- March 21 **Medicare Part D: Decisions, Dilemmas and Directions** is an all-day symposium sponsored by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) and The AFORM Coalition (Advocates for the Open Review of Medicaid). The program is for advocacy organizations, medical providers, and any others who assist with questions, enrollment and problems related to the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit (Part D). Keynote speaker is Brian Cresta, Director of Region One, US Dept. of Health and Human Services. Topics to be covered are “Exceptional Populations, Exceptional Concerns,” problems facing implementation and enrollment and advice, tools and assistance for advocates. The symposium is 9 am - 4 pm at the Marriott Newton; space is limited. Register by contacting Bill Murphy at 617-506-6041, x15 or <bmurphy@efmir.org>.
- March 21 **Disability Policy Consortium** (DPC) monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.
- March 22 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT)**, 1-3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings
- March 25 **Welcoming Children and Youth with Special Needs: Inclusion as a Spiritual Practice in the Church**, 9 am - 4 pm at Parish of the Epiphany Episcopal Church, 70 Church Street in Winchester. Workshop leader, Sally Patton, says the congregation’s attitude makes the difference between simply tolerating the presence or embracing the opportunity these children and youth provide. The program will include awareness and sensitivity training, teaching strategies, and pastoral/congregational care. The registration fee of \$35/person (\$25/person for groups of 4 from one church) includes breakfast & lunch. For more information contact Carl McDonald at mcdonaldc@macucc.org or 508-875-5233 voice. This event is sponsored jointly by the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.
- March 25 **Youth Leadership Forum 2006** at the Spangler Center, Harvard Business School, 9:30 am - 5 pm, is co-sponsored by Harvard University, Partners for Youth with Disabilities and the Governor’s Commission on Employment of People with Disabilities. Join other young adults from across the Commonwealth to learn about new opportunities, develop skills and network. Space is limited to 40; applications are due by March 6. To get an application contact Deep Chinappa at Partners for Youth with Disabilities, 617-556-4075 voice, 617-314-2989 TTY or <dchinappa@pyd.org>.
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- April 4 **Basic Rights** is a workshop that provides families with an introduction to their rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Massachusetts Special Education Law and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It is designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child's eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. Workshop materials are also available in Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered 6 - 8 pm at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School, 459 Broadway in Cambridge. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- April 5 **RSI Monthly Drop-in Group** – first Wednesday of the month; see March 1st listing for details.
- April 11 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. second Tuesday of the month (See March 14th listing for details.)
- April 13 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30– 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment
- April 18 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston
- April 26 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1-3:30 p.m. (on the 3rd Wednesday this month.) at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information, to request Interpreters, or confirm date and time of meeting. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings
- May 5 **Assistive Technology, Disability, and Family** will feature Judi Rogers, a disabled mother, activist, equipment designer, author and parenting specialist at Through the Looking Glass in Oakland, CA <<http://lookingglass.org/index.php>>. This one-day conference sponsored by the Lemelson Assistive Technology Development Center and the School for Interdisciplinary Arts of Hampshire College in Amherst is for families who have a child, parent or grandparent with a disability, adaptive equipment designers, engineers, students, educators and community advocates. For more information contact the Lemelson Assistive Technology Development Center at 413-559-5613 or go their website at <<http://lemelson.hampshire.edu>>.
- May 11 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 – 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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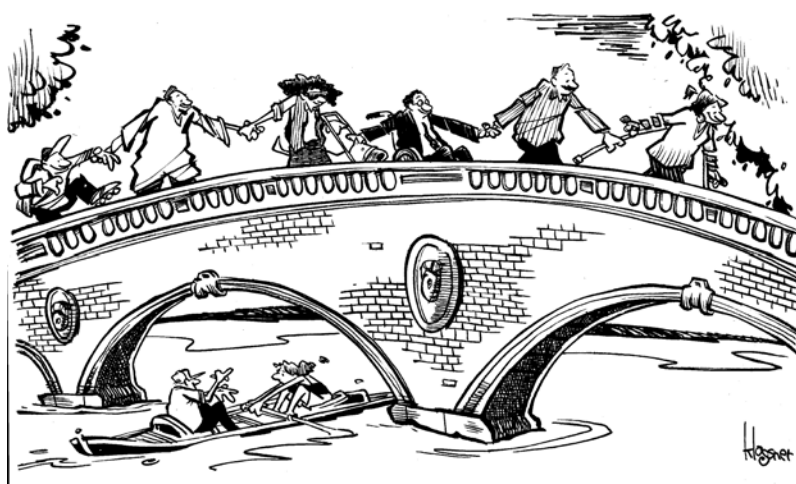
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51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

51 Inman Street, second floor
Cambridge, MA 02139